

Editorials

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A CIA watchdog group would ease many doubts

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has been thrust back into the spotlight of public attention by recent events in the Caribbean and by NBC's splendid documentary, *The Science of Spying*, on television a few nights ago.

However distasteful the thought may be to most Americans, the Caribbean events and the TV documentary remind us that we are deeply involved in the business of espionage. It can be a dirty business. Many of its facets require us to engage in activities that conflict with our moral scruples. Yet, as Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell made clear on the documentary, the turbulent conditions in the world around us make it absolutely essential to our own security that we invest huge sums and enormous effort in this enterprise.



—Burck, Chicago Sun-Times

When all that has been conceded, however, there is still room to question whether we have found the most suitable way to maintain, direct and control the CIA operation. The President and his top-most advisers, presumably know what the CIA is doing. A handful of congressmen is let in on some of the secrets.

Nevertheless, despite the assurances of Mr. Dulles, the evidence is strong that the CIA is largely a self-contained and self-sufficient agency, and that many of its activities are conducted on its own without the knowledge of Congress and without any direct guidance from above.

The CIA, of course, cannot function in the full glare of publicity. It is forced to operate in a shadow area and its operations necessarily must be shadowy. The sums it spends, the agents it hires, and the specific activities it pursues—all these must be top secret.

The public would be reassured, however, and the activities of the CIA would not necessarily be impaired, if a joint congressional committee were established as an overseer of the whole CIA operation.

Congress has demonstrated with its joint committee on atomic energy that it can form a committee of able, conscientious members who can handle a delicate and difficult overseeing assignment with skill and responsibility. A similar watchdog committee for the CIA would ease many of the doubts that now plague the American people.